



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

March 2016

Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month:

- Low energy levels and restlessness
- Mid-semester slump and sickness
- Making plans for next year – housing, classes and financial aid
- Hidden conflicts between roommates and friends begin to arise
- Drug and alcohol use may increase
- Mid-term anxiety
- Seniors thinking about graduation
- Excitement or depression about Spring Break plans
- Pledging begins for Greek organizations
- Changing or deciding on a major

Getting Beyond the Mid-Semester Slump

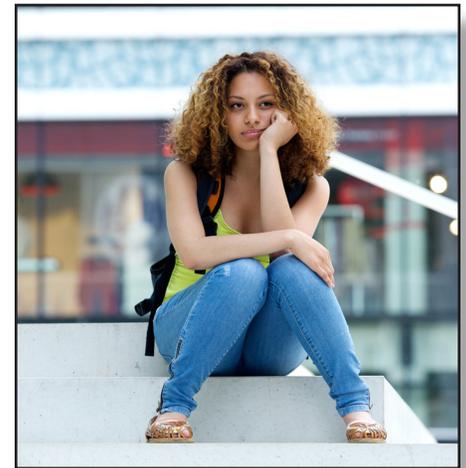
Dreary weather, perpetual sniffles and feeling overwhelmed often come together in March, leading some students into a mid-semester slump. They may sound “blah” when you talk on the phone or need a nap when you see them in person.

However, this temporary season of the slump isn't permanent and there *are* things you can do to help your student come out better on the other side. For instance...

Focus on Positives. Share positive news from home rather than talking about illnesses, troubles and trials. And ask your student

Is It More Than a Slump?

If you're concerned that your student may be depressed or anxious, encourage him to check in with a helpful campus counselor. These professionals are here to help and know how to work well with college students!



the simple question, “What is something that went *right* this past week?” to help him focus on something positive.

Encourage Being Other-Involved. A surefire way to break the internal focus that often accompanies a mid-semester slump is to do things for others. That can mean encouraging your student to work on a service project, write to a friend in the military or take a friend out for birthday coffee. The shift can be subtle, yet profound.

Promote Self-Care. You know your student, so you know what she will respond to best in terms of self-

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Supporting Busy Students

March can be a busy month when students may not be in touch with you as often as you're used to. The reasons are numerous:

- Student organizations they've joined are busy planning end-of-the-term activities
- Midterm exams and papers are fast approaching
- They've made more friends on campus and are spending time with them
- They are knee-deep in job searching for the summer or after graduation
- Community service involvements have deepened, as folks learn how reliable and competent students are

Try not to take it personally, as being busy and engaged is what helps many students stay – and succeed – in school. Reach out to let your student know that you're there and interested in hearing about his busy life. He'll likely have tales to tell!

But, Are They TOO Busy?

Many students are guilty of holding “I had less sleep than you did” or “I'm SO busy!” contests. This tends to be a particular phenomenon among student leaders. They swap tales of all-nighters, crammed schedules and three-page To Do lists, almost as a badge of honor, to prove that they are in demand and working hard. Yet, this approach really isn't good for them. After all, it's *NOT* a contest!

If your student seems caught up in this type of frenzy, there are a few discussion points you can tap into to help him assess what is really going on. For instance:

Reasons. What drives him to do all that he is doing? Interest? Fear of life after college? Competition? An

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inability to say “no”? By getting deep into the “why” behind his actions, you can help him break it down into a healthier approach.

Enjoyment. What does she enjoy about certain involvements? And does the negative-speak you hear about others (i.e. when she complains about the inefficiency of her student group) indicate that maybe that's not a healthy use of her time and energy?

Feeling Valued. How does he feel valued by others, whether it's you, his siblings, his professors, his advisors or his fellow students? Is he looking for approval or trying to meet perceived expectations?

Reactions. What are her reactions when someone else talks about being so busy? Admiration? Thinking that they're showing off? Empathy? Feeling bad for them and offering to help?

Help her examine WHY she might have those reactions.

Working Smart. Is he “working smart” to manage time and tasks? Maybe he needs assistance with time management to juggle the multiple things on his plate.

Life. Does she feel that anything in her life is suffering due to her hectic schedule? Sleep? Grades? Making new friends? Time to exercise? Help her look at her overall life to see what's good and what might be missing.

By addressing this with your busy student before she crashes and burns out, you can help her determine how she wants to spend her time and the healthiest ways to accomplish that. Involvement and experiencing all that college has to offer is wise; acting like you're in a “busy contest” is not. You can help her see the difference.

Handling Conflicts

Is your student starting to conflict with a friend or roommate? Some simple suggestions to help her handle this include...

- Talk directly *with* the people involved instead of gossiping *about* them to others
- Get advice from a trusted professional about how to bring up a concern
- Use “I” statements when discussing the conflict (“I feel...”)
- Take a good, hard look at the role you play within the current conflict
- Determine where you're willing to compromise – and where you are not
- If you're not feeling safe, get a trusted professional involved



Selecting a Major

This may be the time when your student needs to choose a major. There are ways you can help him with this important process...

- Listen, as he'll likely have some processing to do.
- Support the exploration of a variety of potential careers, no matter how many times your student changes his mind.
- Encourage your student to make academics a high priority.
- Identify the talents and abilities you have observed in your student and share them with him.
- Encourage your student to find his passion and pursue a vocation rather than simply guaranteeing himself a job.
- Encourage him to build skills and strengths out of the classroom that complement his in the classroom learning too.
- Be careful not to expect your student to follow in your footsteps or take over the family career "legacy."
- Promote internships, job shadowing and mentoring as a means to "test" possible majors and career paths.



Reflecting with Your Student

Here are some possible reflection questions to ask students exploring a major...

- What are your passions? What do you really care about and want to contribute to?
- What have some of your favorite classes been? Why?
- How have you performed in these classes? What have you learned?
- What majors float to the top given your favorite classes and passions?
- How does this major(s) relate to career options of interest?
- What are the implications of changing your major now?

To Know as a Parent

- Be aware that the majority of college students change their major at least once.
- Recognize that many career choices today require further schooling such as graduate school or professional school.
- Encourage your student to visit the Career Center and an academic advisor every year of college. It isn't just for seniors anymore!

- Ask intentional questions to help your student filter through what can be an overwhelming decision.

Students will be feeling a variety of pressures, especially given the fears surrounding today's economy. The best thing you can do is be supportive of your student, encourage him to pursue a career he can be happy with and proud of, and to take advantage of as many learning opportunities as he can while in college.

Getting Beyond the Mid-Semester Slump

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care. That may mean a care package filled with fuzzy socks, a jump rope, dental floss and banana chips, or a home-cooked meal packed with vegetables – and love.

Offer Something to Look Forward to. Often, when we're feeling

down, creating a sense of anticipation can help us look forward in positive ways. So, talk with your student about the movie you'll see together next weekend or the spring break friend brunch you're glad to host at your house.

All of these things can help your student beat the slump!



Spring Break Safety

Is your student heading out on a spring break adventure? If so, remind him to:

- Stay with people he knows, rather than going off with people he just met
- Use the buddy system with friends he trusts
- Decline drinks from people he doesn't know (whether they're alcoholic or not – a colorless, flavorless drug could have been slipped in)
- Control his alcohol intake – he shouldn't let himself become so intoxicated that his judgment is impaired
- Watch out for friends
- Never get involved in illegal activity, especially in another country where penalties could be very high
- Keep his valuables locked away – and not bring too much valuable stuff with him in the first place
- Remember the phrase: “it could happen to me”

Although these seem like basic reminders, they are important tips for students traveling with friends. And these warnings hold true for so many different types of spring break trips, from those that are purely recreational to those that involve service. What's most important is that your student makes positive decisions and keeps himself safe, no matter where he goes.

When They're Out with Friends

Here are some tips to share with students to help themselves, while also helping friends not perpetrate sexual violence and not become the victims of sexual violence.

- Keep track of one another
- Step in if a friend is in a dangerous position
- Help your friend home if he/she is intoxicated
- Have a code word you can quickly text to a friend if you need help or want to leave
- Get involved – even if it might upset your friend initially – if your gut tells you to
- Have taxi or shuttle numbers in your phone
- Seek help if you're not sure what to do
- Look out for your own well-being, too

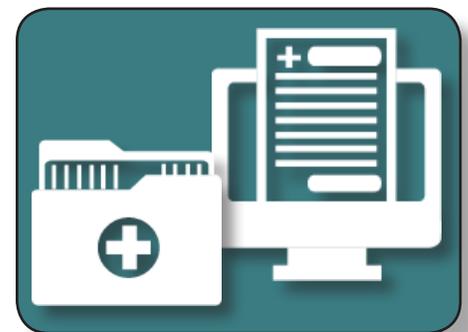
Creating a Medical File: Promoting Health Responsibility Among Students

Students can often get so caught up in their busy lives that they forget to make appointments to visit the dentist, doctor or other medical professionals. Unfortunately, this is a bad short-term practice that can become a bad lifetime habit, as your student fails to put her well being first.

So, consider working with her to create a medical file that contains the following:

- A list of up-to-date vaccinations
- What medications she is on
- Dates of last doctor visits
- Contact info, including websites, addresses and phone numbers, of medical professionals she has an established relationship with
- Health insurance ID numbers
- Any other details that could be helpful to know

Helping her create a file, complete with all the medical details, allows her to take stock of her medical history – and to take



responsibility for what she has to do next as she takes these steps into adulthood. Here's to your student's health!